

Local Highway Jurisdiction Needs

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Good morning. My job this morning is to explain to you what the Local Highway Jurisdictions have in the way of needs for the local highway system throughout the State of Idaho. When I talk about a Local Highway Jurisdiction, I am talking about Cities that have authority for their roads and streets, Counties that have authority over their roads, and all Highway Districts. They are composed of 191 Cities, 33 Counties and the 64 Highway Districts, for a total of 288 Local Highway Jurisdictions. Those Local Highway Jurisdictions employ about 1,820 people.

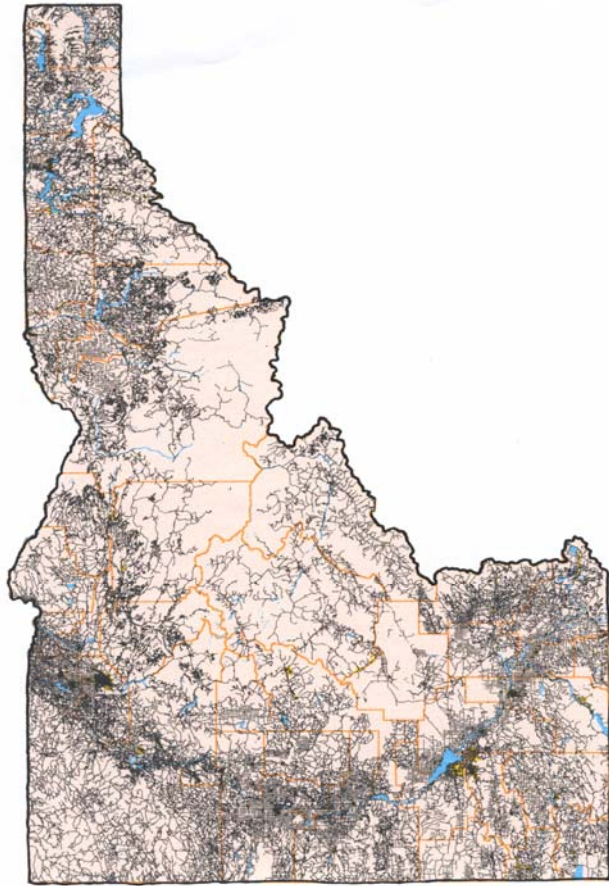
Our system is comprised of more than 33,250 centerline miles of roadways. Approximately 45% of those miles has some type of surface on it, usually asphalt or a combination of chip seals, and the remainder is unsurfaced, by that I mean has no hard surface, but could have a gravel surface or merely dirt in some cases.

We have 2,283 bridges, a bridge being a structure with a span of 20 feet or more and untold numbers of culverts, irrigation and drainage facilities to take care of. Of the total 2,283 bridges on our system, 211 are in such poor condition that they qualify for bridge replacement funds under the Federal-aid Program.



The other item we track is the number of railroad crossings we have, which amount to 1,275 on the local system. Some, but certainly not all have been protected with crossing gates and as time and money will allow, we continue to upgrade those facilities using rail-crossing funds.

As a visual of our system, I would like to show you these two overheads to give you an idea of the magnitude of the system that we are talking about. The first slide is the state highway system, including the Interstates. You will notice this connects almost all parts of our State, and is what we would call the arteries of a transportation system, similar to the arteries in your body. As you can see from this overhead, the local roads are not shown and those are the ones that get to your businesses and the homes where we live and work.



This next slide shows all of the local roads without the state highway system included, and I believe gives a visual representation of the more than 33,000 miles of road take care of. One would consider these the capillaries of the system.

One interesting note about the mileage of the local system is that it increases a little over 300 miles per year. These are generally roads that have been constructed in new subdivisions and commercial developments, and are taken over by Local Highway Jurisdictions once they have been constructed. Between 1990 and 2003, the system grew 4,022 miles.

When we look for funding to improve our local road system, we always look to the federal funds for the larger projects. It should be noted, however, that of the 33,250 miles of local roads, only 5,366 are eligible for Federal-aid funding. That leaves, 27,884 miles ineligible for Federal-aid assistance on roadway improvements.

Later on, Dwight Bower is going to give you the results of the Capital Improvement projections for the next 30 years. It amounts to a mind-numbing number, but one that needs to be addressed. My purpose this morning is to talk about the other needs and that is the needs of the Local Highway Jurisdictions to merely maintain the miles of roads we have in the State.

In 1995, a report was prepared to show the cost responsibility for funding and maintaining our roadway system. That cost responsibility report shows that 70% of our maintenance and operations funds should come from user fees. That would be from the Highway Distribution Account of gasoline taxes and vehicle registrations, plus a few other items. The remaining 30% should come from non-user fees, such as property tax, impact fees, PILT funds and Craig Wyden moneys.

In reviewing the Local Highway Jurisdictions' annual financial reports, which we receive every year, it shows that we are spending over 54% of our funds from non-user sources; basically property taxes and Craig Wyden funds. The remaining 45% comes from the user fees or the Highway Distribution Account. This would indicate to us that we are not receiving enough funds from the Highway Distribution Account. This is the account that we share with the Idaho Transportation Department and the Idaho State Police. The Local Highway Jurisdictions get 38% of the Highway Distribution Account, ITD gets 57% and ISP gets 5%.

As you know, the Highway Distribution Account has been flat for the last five years and is not expected to change in the near future. Conversely, the vehicle miles traveled has increased substantially, and we estimate that 46% of all vehicle miles traveled are on the local road system.

Additionally, the statistics show that the highest crash rates on our highway system occur on rural, two-lane roads, many of which are the local road system. Consequently, we need to do more from a maintenance and operations standpoint, as well as, improve the critical unsafe conditions on the rural system.

Just as a note about expenditures of the Local Highway Jurisdictions, the finance reports show that they spend 49% of their money on maintenance. That would be pothole patching, sanding, snow plowing, etc., and 41% on construction and rehabilitation. As you might suspect, not many new roads are built by Local Highway Jurisdictions, but reconstruction, widening, rehabilitating are a major portion of the work we do. The remaining 9% + is for administration of the Local Highway Jurisdictions' operations.

Last year, LHTAC embarked on a program to map and assess the condition of the 33,000 miles of the local road system. We are more than half way through that process and at the completion of the program we hope to have a statewide inventory of the local roads and the condition of those local roads to better discuss our needs with you and the Legislature. We believe this Asset Management Program can be used and updated annually to address the needs and accomplishments on the local road system. The program will inventory signs, drainage structures, and include the bridges and railroad crossing facilities in the database. We are using college students in the Engineering field to gather our field data and we are housing all of the collected data at LHTAC, in one central repository. We are providing the Local Highway Jurisdictions with their system, on computer-based software, and will ask them to update it on an annual basis, similar to what is done with the County Rural Administration Board in the State of Washington.

Probably the biggest hit the Local's have taken in recent times is the astronomical increase in cost for operating, as well as, cost of materials in the road building business. Overall cost for street and highway construction over the last four years has gone up 7%. As a general guide however, certain items have skyrocketed; those being fuel, steel, concrete, asphalt and health insurance, just to name a few. We recently opened bids on a 35-mile-long chip seal project in Boise County. Our estimate for the chips was \$18 a ton. The bid price came in at \$50 per ton. We contacted the contractors to find out why and both of them indicated it was because they had to haul the material from Valley County and the cost of the haul, because of increased fuel prices, was the extenuating factor for the process. As we operate snow plows, street sweepers and graders, you can imagine what the increased fuel costs are doing to our budgets.

So in summary, I would ask that you not only look at the capital needs for our local highway system that Mr. Bower will discuss, but please don't forget the real need for improving our maintenance and operation fund so that we can at least keep up with inflation.

To quote Bill Henry, President of the ASCE, "We need to establish a comprehensive, long term infrastructure plan as opposed to our current patch and pray method".

Thank you.